# A LETTER from an Absent LORD to one of his FRIENDS in the Convention.

My Lord,

SInce you seem surpriz'd that I answered not the Letter in which your Lp. so earnestly prest to see me at *London* and at the Convention, in my place in the House of Peers: you will undoubtedly be more surpriz'd to understand now, that the Letter from the House which I have received as well as the rest of the Lords, who stay in the Country, wrought no more upon me, than the many reasons alledged by your Lp. To deal ingenuously, I will freely tell you, that it absolutely confirm'd me in my former Resolution to tarry at Home, and have nothing to do with your Assembly, strongly suspecting that we were sent for, only for Forms sake, and that nothing was fear'd more, than a full House of Lords; for your Lp. (I suppose) will agree with me, that, if we had all come up, you would not have been able to carry every thing according to the Pleasure of your new King, since the Vote of the House of Commons prevailing with much adoe by bare two or three Voices, he was forced to make use of Threats and Promises to gain eight or ten more to pass it. You will easily believe that I and the greatest part of those who remain in the Country, would not have Voted on that side: And therefore I leave it with you to judge whether your self and some sixty more, who Voted with you could have carried it against above one hundred and fifty who have had no hand in your Doings: Wherefore I could not but perceive, that when they made Letters be written to us in the Name of the Upper-house, and engaged our particular Friends to urge our repair to *London*, they mock'd both them and us, and feared nothing so much as to see all the Peers of the Kingdom assembled. For then, resolutions so extravagant, and so contrary to the good of the Nation, as have been taken, would never have past. I pardon those of meaner extraction, as —— who being sensible they were the first of their Race honoured with the Title of Lord, and made equal to those in whose Families heretofore they would have been glad to have liv'd, were the most eager to give the full swing to their new Honour, which they have so ill acknowledged from the King who gave it. I likewise Pardon the Lords, —— whom the uneasiness of their Condition has cast into the wrong side, and those who have been drawn in, they themselves, as it often happens among us, not well knowing why. But I must confess I understand not how divers others, no ways subject to the same temptations, could be tainted with Baseness enough, to engage in an attempt so black and abominable as it is, to renounce the Obedience, which by Nature and Oath they owe to a lawful King only, to become Slaves to the Prince of *Orange*.

'Tis likely another would tell me I speak like a *Papist*, and an Advocate for *Arbitrary Power*, but you well know that I am of the Church of *England*, and that I have been so little employed in publick Matters, and so little Favoured, since the death of His late Majesty, that I am not liable to the suspicion of Partiality. 'Tis true, I have not only unconcernedly observ'd, but sometimes prais'd the Kings zeal to favour his *Papists* as much as he could, for I always thought, and so, to your knowledge did many of our Friends, that the *Protestant Religion* had nothing to fear, and that the noisy Designs to destroy it were no more than imaginary. I was always persuaded, and still am, that more improper means to advance *Popery* could not be taken, then those which were; and so it would never sink into my Head that there was any harm towards *Protestant Religion* in all those Alarms which startled many Religious *Protestants*, who by their own Fears, and the Artifice of those who care not one pin for Religion, have been dipt in the present doings, of which I doubt, we shall not see an end so soon. Pray, my Lord, could a Man of sense be alarmed at an Embassy to *Rome* when we knew the Ambassador so well as we did? And knew the first thing he did at *Rome*, was to fall out with good Cardinal *Howard*, and all that were able to instruct him in what might conduce to his purpose? Nuncio *Dada* too was a likely man to endanger the Reformation: I for my part, could never believe otherwise, but that he dreamt more of a Red Cap, than making Converts. Had he been put to defend his Religion against our Bishops, in what a case would he have been, whose Divinity stretcht no farther, then to exclaim perpetually against, and *all to be Heretick* the *French*, often to the Scandal, and sometimes Laughter of the Company, especially when he would take upon him to play the Doctor: To my thinking most of the *Papists* were much discontented and slighted him among themselves, at least some have told me, that the *Pope* himself was ill satisfied with him, and would recall him, but since he did it not, it must needs be that he either ill understood the Affairs of *England*, or cared little for them. However it be these are the only hands, through

which past all the Traffick betwixt *England* and *Rome*, whereof the one brought as bad Relations from thence, as the other sent from hence: And we may conclude, that the the reunion of the two Churches were possible, it would never be, by the Politicks of the Ambassador, or Learning of the Nuncio.

I hear what is said of the Kings dispensing with the Test, his employing and advancing *Papists* to very considerable Places; his filling his Army with them, and his design of suppressing our Religion and Liberty by them; and I know how much it has been, endeavoured this last twelve Months to heighten these things and fright us all. To say the Truth, I must acknowledge I was my self for sometime of the number of those who believed there might be something in it: But it is now but too plain, that there was nothing. For had the King taken such Measures for such a purpose, he had not been so shamefully betrayed, whereas trusting to *Protestants*, he has hardly found a Man who would venture his Life for Him. In good Faith, my Lord, the injury we have done our Religion, grieves me strangely. For what Prince will ever trust us more, when all the Declarations of our Church and Universities, our Oaths, and whatever is most Sacred among Men, bind us no longer then we think fit? Our Bishops and Clergy as often as they Preach against *Papists* and reproach the inconsistancy of their Doctrine with the Duty of Subjects to their Soveraign, are sure to meet with an Answer; and I fancy there will fine Comments be made on a *Coronation Sermon*, the Dean of *Canterbury's* Letter to my Lord *Russel*, and the *Oxford* Censures, *&c.* I confess to you I know not what to say, save that all good *Protestants* will look upon those who have hurried your Convention into such Extremities, as *Rebels*, insensible of Religion or Law, and that as excusable as many honest dissenting Men among the Commons may be, the rest will not be reckoned among the true Children of the Church of *England*, nor of her Communion. I am thinking to write of this matter to a Bishop a Learned and an Honest Man, tho I believe I know his mind by my own before hand. If the *Yeas* among you alleadged reasons of weight enough to silence all the scruples, which the Case must needs raise, you will much oblige me to acquaint me with them. For I declare to you, that as little as I pretend to Learning, I fancy I am Schollar enough to be pretty well assured there was none to be alleadged able to satisfy a Man who has never so little smack of the Duty of Christianity; but strangely perswade my self there Votes were grounded upon the detestable maxims of *Doleman*; and *Buchanan*, *Knox*, *Goodwin*, *Milton*, and such *Presbyterian* Saints, whose Books, as often as they have been forbidden and condemned by the Parliaments and Church of *England*, I expect should now be Re-printed by order of the Convention, not that I believe the leading Gentlemen troubled themselves at this time much with scruples: There is no better remedy against the Disease, than that Fanatical spirit which was predominant in your Assembly, chiefly in the House of Commons, made up for the most part of Non-Conformist *Presbyterians*, who by the Laws of Q. *Elizabeth* and later Statutes ought to have been excluded. But let your new King alone for that matter, let him once be but steady in his Throne, he will quickly bring in more Christian Principles among you: Tho my Lords the Bishops, I am perswaded, will be the first Reformed, according to the primitive Apostolick Pattern, and being eased of the heavy load of useless Riches, and worldly Honours, reduced, according to my Lord *Shaftsbury's* wish, to a Pension of bare 100 *l. per Annum*; some of them, to my grief, deserve it but too well, and if I should resolve to make one amongst you, I will not answer I shall Vote against it. But I declare to you, I shall concur in nothing else, and it shall be no fault of mine if those Lords with whom I have any credit; joyn not to undoe all you have done as soon, as the Nation, which I hope it quickly will, shall open its Eyes and become sensible of the infamy which your Convention has thrown upon it.

The truth is, there need no meeting for the matter. For that were to suppose some Authority in what you have done, whereas it has none: and is every way extravagant. You must needs have lost your Wits, if you imagine we shall ever take the Votes of your Houses for Laws. You will know that *England* acknowledges no other Law, but those which are made by Lawful Authority, that is, by the King in Parliament. Search all Parliaments, search all Court-Rolls, there are no other to be found. I appeal to the very Lawyers, who, after they had been of Councel to all the Seditious Men; and Conspirators of late times, were chosen to be yours. These Famous Lawyers and you your selves, know that no Authority but the King's alone, can call the Peers and Commons together, and you acknowledg'd it, by not daring at first, to take the Name of Parliament upon you. You are therefore Convened by the bare Authority of the Prince of *Orange*, and that Authority you gave him, tho' you had none to give him.; Put case you had, he was incapable either to receive or exercise it. For having enter'd the Kingdom in Arms, Declared against the King, and attempted upon His Sacred Person and Liberty; he incurred the Crime of High Treason, and forfeited all his Rights, Honours and Prerogatives in case he be a Subject; If he be not, he is a publick Enemy, and against whom the Nation is bound to stand by the King, and not to obey him under pain of High Treason. And yet this is the Authority by which you sit, and which by your own confession cannot make an Assembly, such as our Laws call a Parliament. And yet this notwithstanding your Convention, which, stretch its Power to the utmost,

moſt, cannot pretend to more than Parliament Power, has done what no Lawful Parliament ever durſt do; Judge their King; Declar'd His forc'd Retreat, to be an Abdication of the Government, and the Throne Vacant; and finally, diſpos'd of it to the uſe of P. of *Orange*. I beſeech you, ſend me word what Preſidents your Learned Councel brought for theſe Reſolves. Thoſe of the *Spencers* and other Traytors of thoſe times? or thoſe of *Cromwel?* I know none elſe who maintained, that as often as a King Governs not according to Law, his Subjects may take Arms and compel him to it. But you know all Parliaments have placed this caſe amongſt Crimes of High Treaſon.

The truth is, you have bethought your ſelves of a ſubtile expedient, which I expect ſhould be clapt for a colour upon your Proceedings, *viz.* that you did not vacate the Throne, but only fill'd it when it was vacant. But in good faith this is to top upon a whole Nation with your falſe diſtinctions. In virtue of what Law I beſeech you, could you declare the Throne vacant? can a parcel of Seditious Men, met at the tumultuous call of an Uſurper, give ſentence in ſuch a cauſe? Is the Kingdom of *England* Elective? and is there any unconteſted Preſident to be found, which Authorizes the People to diſpoſe of the Crown, or declare it Vacant? can an Heriditary Kingdom become Vacant otherwiſe than by the Death of the Lawful Occupant? This way perhaps your new King might have made it Vacant; but tho' it were, is there no Heir? The Prince of *Wales*, for whoſe Birth all *England*, and the Prince of *Orange* himſelf ſo ſolemnly Congratulated with his Father, is He no longer in the World? And is He not conſiderable enough to be thought of? His age is not capable of breaking the *Original Contract*, which you have fancy'd between King and People, and therefore the Throne, if it be Vacant, muſt belong to Him. I know the Prince of *Orange* would make a Counterfeit of Him, and this becomes his Conſcience. But tell me in yours, whether all theſe impotently malicious ſurmiſes, which are ſpread by his Emiſſa: ys, be not palpably ſhameful? So ſhameful, that he has not yet ventur'd to preſs you, as great an Influence as he has among you, to come to a Declaration in that point. It is reſerved it ſeems to your Parliament in which *Oates* and his Brethren of the Poſt, will ſwear ſome miſhappen Oath for *Burnet* to lick over, and you upon their credit enact him ſuppoſitions, in virtue of ſome new Law which ſhall reach backwards, as, *That the Queens of* England *(to purpoſe) ſhall be no where validly Delivered, but in the* Banquetting-Houſe, *both Houſes of Parliament preſent.*

I will ſay nothing of your Grievances, as *much more cry than wool as there is in them.* But I will ſtop a little at the New Oathes, which you ſubſtitute in place of thoſe which are appointed by Law. You, my Lord, have taken the Oaths of *Allegiance*, *Supreamacy*, and the *Teſt*, as well as your Neighbours. Do you believe thoſe Oaths oblig'd you to perform what you ſwore, and ty'd you to the King to whom you ſwore, or do you not? In likelyhood you do not, ſince thoſe Oaths notwithſtanding, you thought your ſelf free to take up Arms againſt your King, and to joyn with His Enemies: of neceſſity then, you muſt either be Perjur'd, or believe there is no regard to be had to Oaths, as indeed you were no Slaves to yours. We muſt be confident Men to reproach the *Papiſts* longer with their Lyes and their Equivocations, (to which abundance of them are no greater Friends than we) when your Convention not only teaches, but orders us to make ſuch *May-Games* of our Oaths. Beſides they were Enacted by Parliament, the bare diſpenſing with which, in favour of *Papiſts*, is a principal part of your Out-cry againſt His Majeſty; with what face can you take them quite away, and pop in others in their room, you who by changing your Convention into a Parliament, acknowledge you have not the Authority of a Parliament? How could you do, what you make a Crime in the King, who at worſt has an Authority, which you have not? Zeal, I ſuppoſe, for *Proteſtant* Religion, will be pleaded for your Proceeding, and your ſtrange Votes againſt the King. And yet it would puzzle the moſt Religious Man of quirk among you to cite the Article of *Proteſtant* Religion, or Act concerning it, which juſtifie your Zeal. There is none which enables Subjects to diſpoſe of the Crown, in caſe their King profeſs not the *Proteſtant* Religion. On the contrary, the laſt Act of *Uniformity* formally deteſts the Doctrine of thoſe who teach that Subjects may take up Arms againſt their King. And tho' ſome Law had made the Profeſſion of the *Proteſtant* Religion neceſſary, to be King of *England*, it were to be underſtood of the *Proteſtant* Religion Eſtabliſhed by Law: yet you take the boldneſs to declare the Throne Vacant, (whatever you pretend to in reality) becauſe the King is of the *Romiſh* Religion, and at the ſame time ſet up a Man who has always been of a Religion contrary to Law, as well as the King, ſince the Prince of *Orange* is a *Proteſtant Diſſenter*, for the Law is againſt *Proteſtant Diſſenters* as will as *Papiſts*. But I ſee you take upon you to do, what the *Fanaticks* have ſo often demanded, and no Legal Parliament yet would ever grant, to take away the *Penal Laws* from *Proteſtant Diſſenters*, and leave them ſtill in force againſt *Papiſts*. Where I ask again, what Authority you have to alter the Laws, and what pretence to Diſpenſe with them, when you fall out with the King for Diſpenſing? Turn it which way you will, theſe Proceedings are unmaintainable, and as you are no Stranger to our Laws, you will I make no doubt, acknowledge that there is no ſpeaking of them and your Votes the ſame day.

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And then the King is traduced with designing *Arbitrary Power*, when the *Arbitrary Power* of the Convention has subverted more in a week, than our Kings in a hundred years. It has subverted the Fundamental Law of Succession, all that have been made for the security of Kings and the State, those of Supremacy, of Uniformity in Religion, and so many other, that there will hardly remain more, than just to keep *Nisi prius* es going. For in what concerns Criminal matters, all Laws have been laid aside by the illegal Proceedings against divers *Papists* and others. Peers as well as Commons Imprison'd against Law, and this at the very time in which complaint was made of bringing one into the *King's-Bench*, who ought to have been Try'd in Parliament. Peers are priviledg'd Persons; how then can you take upon you to Arrest even *Popish* Peers, you who neither had the Authority, nor Name of a Parliament? The Law allows the meanest Man in the Nation his *Habeas Corpus*, and by it his Liberty upon Bail, and yet you refused it to Peers. The Chancellor is the Third Man in the Kingdom, and has the priviledge not only of his Peerage, but of his Office, which makes the usage he has received, Treason. And yet you have put and kept him in Prison; notwithstanding that, even tho' you had been a Lawful Parliament, all you could do, is t. Address to the King to punish him for Male-administration, if he be guilty. But I will enlarge no farther upon your irregular doings, whereof I do not think it possible to pack a greater number into one Vote. I will only tell you (that to my thinking) your Convention has outdone the long Parliament it self in bare fac'd contempt of the Laws. Those Seditious Paricides stumbled not, as you do, at the Threshold. They demanded, and (tho' by very bad means) obtained a Parliament. They acknowledged the Kings Power when they met, they sought, and (to his, and the whole Nations misfortune) got his consent to an Act for not Dissolving or Proroging them, without their own consent. They then, kept at least some measures, you keep none; and they were a Parliament, you are not. I know you ill, if you will always be content the World should think something better of the most execrable Paracides, that ever were, and take you for the less modestly wicked of the two.

For what concerns your new King, he has nothing but Force to trust to, the only thing which can silence the Laws and preserve him. But I am persuaded that you, who are his Favourites, will be the first to repent the trusting your Liberty in such bad hands. Those Brutes of *Hollanders*, are far from the Free-men which he found them. He persuaded them to rid themselves of their best Patriots, as he has persuaded you to rid your selves of your King: and is like to make you sensible one day, that your great Liberty which you found, it seems, uneasy, will bid fair to enslave you. If persuasions will not do, there are other expedients in the World, which may, and if we will believe malicious Tongues, have been thought of, I for my part am resolved to stay at home, till I see which way matters are like to go. Whatever you Write, I cannot but think them wondrous tottering still, tho' he has appeared in his Robes, perhaps suspecting, that if he had stay'd his Coronation day, he might never have worn them. Between you and me, the Description you make, puts me in mind of Kings in old Tapestry, with their Crowns and their Mantles always on, even in Bed. 'Tis like that day he went to Bed with his, to expose the *Rarer-Show* a while longer: But let him Reign over those, who find him, and his ways to their mind, happen what will, I will not taint my Family and my Credit, no not with Treason, if sure to be pardoned, and the Infamy of acknowledging a Foreign Usurper, whose double Alliance to the Royal Family, is the only pretence he has to the honour of commanding us. When I take a fancy to choose a Master, I will pitch upon one of a higher rank. As my humour is, I should rather, if I had been a *Hollander*, have obey'd the King of *Spain*, than a Gentleman of *Germany*; and being an *English-man* will never submit to a man, whose Nobility is no higher rais'd above mine. And this is my *Resolve upon the Question*, to which I believe, I shall always adhear, let what will be offered to the contrary. As for the dismal consequences, with which you threaten me, I hope they will pass one way or other. For we live in the Land of Revolutions, where Changes happen in a moment, and always without knowing why. If they will not let me stay quietly at home, *Ireland* is not so far off, but that I may slip thither, where, as I have a Title, I declare to you before hand, that if the King call a Parliament, you are like to hear news of *Dometas*. I do not mean to be Deaf and Dumb there, as I have been to your Convention. Only I am troubled for my Countrey-men, whom their Titles, or other considerations, make answerable before a Parliament of *Ireland*. If the rigour of the Law should fall upon them, they can the less complain, because the *English* having set the *Irish* so many examples of severity, and that too in the case of men, who had done and suffered much for the King, they cannot well expect to be spared by the *Irish*. These thoughts grieve a man who loves his Nation. But since all the Calamities, still fresh in memory, which the last long Rebellion power'd upon the Kingdom, cannot extinguish that violent Animosity, which some men have against Lawful Princes, who can complain or wonder, if Providence permit it those which are not so. I shall have at least, the satisfaction to have had no hand in them, and will never with your distinction of *de facto*, and *de jure* Kings, distinguish my self into the Politick Idolatry of falling down before the Idol of the Commons. Perhaps we may one day see the *Golden Calf* bruised to pieces. You may dance about it in the mean time, and your *Aaron* the Bishop of *London* and such *Levites* cry out, *These are thy Gods* O Israel, *which have brought thee out of the Bondage of* Ægypt. This is the *MESSIAS* of the *Presbyterians*, who has broken in pieces the *CHAINS* of *POPERY*, and delivered you from the *Slavery* of *Arbitrary Power*. They may amuse, and they may lull you asleep, till you wake, much I fear, in Blood. God in his Mercy, will I hope, take pity on honest Men. And as to the Gentlemen of the *House of Commons*, we may possibly live to see some of them led to *Tyburn*. Many to my knowledge did deserve it long before the Convention, and without that Dispensing Power, against which they are now so eager, bid much fairer for the *Halter* than the *Legislative* Power, for Hanging than for Parliament Speeches. The worst is, that nothing they have, or can do, can keep them clear of the guilt of High Treason, into which they have run you All; and the best I can wish you, is that our Lawful King may speedily return, and bury all Faults in an Act of Oblivion, the only thing which can secure your Estates, your Honours, and your Lives. It was the Advice of [illegible] who came to him for Councel in the time of *Charles* the [illegible] you perhaps will of me. But he was found to be in the right at last, and so, I hope, shall I. In the mean time I intreat you that these Matters may not slacken our old Friendship, I am, &c.

*London*, 20th *April* 1689.